



City of Carpinteria

Environmental Review & Monitoring

Status Report

2016



Prepared For: The City of Carpinteria

Prepared By: Vince Semonsen, Consulting Biologist

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1.0 Introduction

This report documents the Environmental Review and Monitoring work for the City of Carpinteria during the year 2016 by Mr. Vince Semonsen the Consulting Biologist to the City. Mr. Semonsen participates in the review of development projects for biological impacts, identification of appropriate mitigation measures and/or conditions of approval, is a voting member of the Environmental Review Committee (ERC), and provides oversight monitoring of construction projects ensuring the implementation of all mitigation measures. The City Biologist also conducts sensitive species surveys and nesting bird surveys on an as needed basis, in addition to the regular oversight of our local sensitive species (i.e. monarch butterflies, steelhead and tidewater gobies).

Over the last year there were no large-scale construction projects requiring intensive and long-term oversight by the City Biologist. The Caltrans Linden-Casitas Interchanges Project began in 2016 and is expected to take several years, however, environmental oversight is being provided by Caltrans. Several small projects were completed that required nesting bird surveys and some construction monitoring. A number of projects required the continuation of the long-term revegetation monitoring.

2.0 Construction Monitoring

2.1 Caltrans Linden-Casitas Interchanges Project

In 2015 the sewerline under Carpinteria Creek was relocated and the old Whitney Residence was demolished in preparation for the Caltrans Linden-Casitas Interchange project. The City Biologist has kept tabs on the project even though Caltrans has a whole monitoring team to oversee the work.



Carpinteria Creek just upstream of Hwy 101

In mid October construction fencing was installed around Carpinteria Creek with signage indicating sensitive habitat. By mid November crews had cleared the Carpinteria Creek construction corridor and installed erosion control BMPs.

Spot checking the construction activities continues by the City Biologist especially after the larger rain events. The creek corridor has suffered some erosion but the winter storms have been larger than we've seen in years.

2.2 Sand Berm

The City Biologist continued the City beach surveys before the sand berm work in the spring and fall, then provided monitoring while equipment was on the beach. Prior to starting work the equipment operator is given a brief environmental training followed by regular inspections of the activities. Coordination and communication with Matt Roberts the Carpinteria Director of Parks and Recreation continues through the process. This year we had two firsts, we had grunion running in the spring and snowy plovers occupied the beach in the fall.



Grunion on the Carpinteria City Beach

Due to environmental conditions (i.e. high tides, big surf etc.) we missed the window to knock down the sand berm before the start of the grunion runs in the spring of 2016. This meant we had to do night surveys for grunion prior to removing the berm. If the grunion “ran” and laid eggs on the City beach, we would have to postpone the berm work so as not to damage the eggs. The grunion did run for several high tide cycles, but the berm was finally knocked down in mid May 2016.

The spring sand berm work/grunion monitoring is documented in a June 29th memo to Matt Roberts, Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Carpinteria.

Building the berm in the fall began in late November. On the first day of work two snowy plovers were seen on the City beach. The operator was informed of this and asked to avoid working near the birds. By the next day the plovers were gone and did not return – the sand berm was finished within a few days time. There were no violations of the project conditions.



Snowy Plovers on the Carpinteria City beach

3.0 Creek Surveys & Monitoring

3.1 Carpinteria Creek Committee

Creek Committee meetings were occasionally attended by the City Biologist, participating in the planning and upgrade of the Carpinteria watersheds.

3.2 Flood Control

Santa Barbara County Flood control put out their creek maintenance document and it was reviewed by City Staff and the City Biologist. In the fall of 2016 they planned to do some vegetation clearing in Lagunitas and Carpinteria Creeks, and possibly some sediment removal from Franklin Creek.

The city biologist met with the flood control crew and city staff member Nick Bobroff to discuss the proposed work in the creeks, the timing of the work and provide a brief environmental training to the crew.

Vegetation within Lagunitas creek was thickly overgrown, taking the crew several days to clear. I asked them to remove some pampas grass noted within the creek corridor. Sediment removal was scheduled for later in the year during periods of low tides, but they opted out of doing any sediment removal this year.



3.3 Creek Surveys

In the fall just prior to the winter rains the City Biologist tries to walk Carpinteria Creek to pick up trash and evaluate the health of the creek corridor. In mid October the creek was surveyed from the Creek Park downstream to the Carpinteria Ave. bridge. Trash is a big problem along this stretch and a number of homeless encampments were noted within the creek corridor. A call was placed to Erin Maker (Environmental Coordinator for the Public Works Department) to let her know about the encampments, she responded saying she was grateful for the information and that they have been doing monthly creek clean-ups.

4.0 Long-term Revegetation Monitoring

4.1 Lagunitas Development Project

In early June the City Biologist met with representatives of the homeowners association and Mark De La Garza and Melanie of Watershed Environmental to look over the riparian corridor

revegetation. We answered the homeowner's questions and flagged the non-native trees and shrubs that should be removed. The riparian corridor looks great – not too many invasive plants and excellent growth of native vegetation.



The Industrial side of the Lagunitas Development Project continues to have problems with Russian thistle (aka Tumbleweed), it currently dominates the undeveloped space.

The Industrial side of the Lagunitas Development Project.

4.2 Chevron/Venoco Soil Remediation Project. In mid-February the City Biologist met with Padre biologist Ken Gilliland to participate in a nesting bird survey prior to some excavation work within the Venoco buffer property. This was just before the nesting bird season but the work wasn't scheduled until later in the month. We also checked on the historic Monarch roost as conditions call for no construction activities within 100 feet of the dripline of the roost. No nesting birds were noted and unfortunately there was no winter Monarch roost within the buffer property.

The revegetation effort looks great with the plantings now being quite well established. The substantial rainfall in the fall and early winter of 2016 have really helped the health of the plants.



Revegetation within the Venoco Buffer property

4.3 Venoco Office Building, Meta-Creations Bluff Restoration, and the Teamsters Project:

The three open space/mitigation areas along the bluff trail all remain in good shape with the native vegetation is doing well and growing. A variety of invasive trees and weeds continue to grow and encroach into the revegetated areas, some starting to overtake and smother the natives. Again, Cape Ivy, Nasturtium, iceplant and eucalyptus trees are the primary problem plants.

5.0 Wildlife

The City Biologist routinely looks for wildlife and nesting birds during all site visits. No new sensitive species were noted in and around the City of Carpinteria during 2016.

A nighttime CA red-legged frog survey was conducted by the City Biologist within Carpinteria Creek, starting at the 8th Street Bridge and going down to the coastal lagoon. Lots of treefrogs were heard and one raccoon was seen, but no red-legged frogs. Still hoping that these sensitive frogs reoccupy Carp Creek.

Tidewater gobies still appear to be occupying Carpinteria creek.

Following the work done by Moe Gomez and the South Coast Habitat Restoration Group, Carpinteria Creek is now almost barrier free such that steelhead can move up into their historic breeding grounds. With the good rainfall in late 2016 we could have sea run steelhead trout coming up the creek – fingers crossed.

Monarch butterfly numbers remain low throughout the state, and again both the winter roost in Carpinteria Creek (i.e. Salzgebor meadow) and the roost in the Venoco buffer property were not occupied. Butterflies were seen flying around the two sites but no roosting clusters were observed.

Lastly, during 2016 the City Biologist gave a vertebrate wildlife presentation for the general public at the Veterans Memorial Building.

6.0 Miscellaneous Consultation

The City Biologist did a brief survey of the Bluffs Three Property.

At the request of the Public Works Department a nesting bird survey was conducted near the 8th Street Bridge in April 2016. They wanted to do some pruning of the large Sycamore tree at the east end of the bridge. No nesting birds were seen in the vicinity of the bridge.

In early July the public works department also needed a nesting bird survey of the 2 large Eucalyptus trees near Tomol Park. They planned to do some pruning of the trees – no active nests were seen.



While checking on flood control work the City Biologist noticed a van parked off of the emergency access road along what used to be called the Teamsters building. The van was parked in the Lagunitas Creek riparian corridor, off of the DG access road. Mr. Semonsen checked in with the facilities managers for the current tennets (Ryan Tully of Procore and Gil Campuzano of PlanMember Services) and asked that they minimize the use of the access road, and never park in the riparian zone.

This access road has been problematic from day one, since what was supposed to be used only in an emergency by the fire department, is now used daily for office activities. In hind sight this road should have been placed on the other side of the building and not in the creek setback.

7.0 General Recommendations

- Weed eradication programs would be beneficial for both Carpinteria Creek and Lagunitas Creek with particular attention given to the eradication of Cape Ivy. Iceplant removal and eradication of eucalyptus saplings is recommended for the mitigation areas along the bluff trail.
- Spring steelhead surveys should be conducted within Carpinteria Creek looking for sea run steelhead and redds.
- A more active oversight of the Caltrans Linden-Casitas Interchanges Project is recommended at this time.